

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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FM AMEMBASSY PARIS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4731
INFO AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE
AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
AMCONSUL HONG KONG

C O N F I D E N T I A L PARIS 22172

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: FR, LA
SUBJECT: FRENCH RELATIONS WITH LAOS

REF: A) VIENTIANE 744, B) BANGKOK 18973

1. THE LAOTIAN EMBASSY CIRCULATED A DIPLOMATIC NOTE DATED JUNE 29 TO ALL FOREIGN MISSIONS IN PARIS, ANNOUNCING THAT THE FRENCH GOVERNMENT HAD GIVEN TWO OF THE THREE LAO DIPLOMATS PRESENT HERE THREE DAYS TO LEAVE FRANCE. THE NOTE STATES THAT "THESE TWO LAO DIPLOMATS HAVE NEVER, DURING THEIR SERVICE IN FRANCE, VIOLATED EITHER OBLIGATIONS DEFINED IN THE VIENNA CONVENTION OR THE INTERNAL LAWS AND RULES OF THE HOST COUNTRY." THE FRENCH ACTION LEAVES ONLY ONE LAO DIPLOMAT IN PARIS, A SECOND SECRETARY WHO HAS BEEN CHARGE D'AFFAIRES FOR ABOUT A YEAR.

2. QUAI OFFICIALS TAKE A RATHER FATALISTIC VIEW OF THE DETERIORATION OF FRENCH RELATIONS WITH LAOS. IN RETROSPECT, THEY ARE INCLINED TO SEE IT AS ALMOST INEVITABLE THAT, FOLLOWING THE REDUCTION IN THE US PRESENCE,
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FRANCE SHOULD BE THE NEXT TARGET. THEY SAY THAT IT HAD BEEN CLEAR FOR SOME TIME THAT THE LAO WANTED TO REDUCE FOREIGN INFLUENCE; IN THIS SITUATION IT BECAME MORE AND MORE POINTLESS TO TRY TO MAINTAIN A LARGE PRESENCE IN VIENTIANE. THE QUAI IS ALSO PESSIMISTIC ABOUT THE FUTURE AND THINKS THE FEW FRENCH CITIZENS WHO REMAIN IN LAOS MAY ALSO HAVE TO LEAVE SOON.

3. AS INFERRED IN REFTELS, THE FRENCH SEE NO STRONG "LOGICAL" REASONS BEHIND THE LAO ACTIONS, EXCEPT INsofar AS THEY ARE CONSISTENT WITH THE EFFORTS AT CULTURAL ISOLATION REFLECTED IN BOTH VIETNAM AND CAMBODIA. (EMBASSY COMMENT: THE PRESENCE OF A LARGE NUMBER OF LAO EXILES IN FRANCE, MANY OF WHOM ARE OPENLY UNFRIENDLY TO THE PRESENT REGIME IN VIENTIANE, HAS PRODUCED AT LEAST ONE GROUP (SEE PARIS 13627 NOTAL) ADVOCATING THE OVERTHROW OF THE PRESENT REGIME. WHATEVER OTHER MOTIVATION THEY MAY HAVE HAD FOR THEIR ACTIONS, THE LAO GOVERNMENT PROBABLY SAW FRENCH TOLERANCE OF SUCH GROUPS AS EVIDENCE OF A HOSTILE ATTITUDE. END COMMENT.) HARTMAN

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